DISABILITY SPECIFIC CAMP EXPERIENCE: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL STUDY.

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BACKGROUND

- Camp experiences provide unique opportunities for campers with disabilities
  - Community building
  - Experience social acceptance
  - Increased sense of quality of life
  - Increased perceptions of competence in skills (e.g., social, independent living, leisure)
  - Decreased feelings of social isolation
PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

To examine the impact camps may have on social acceptance, camp connectedness, friendship skills, and perceived competence among youth with various disabilities.
THEORETICAL FRAME OF STUDY

- Social capital theory (Coleman, 1990)
  - created when social ties are formed between individuals who have equal power among and share a common interests
  - Relays on one agency (i.e. specialized camp),
  - With specific purpose (i.e. to build acceptance, competence, friendships with peers)
  - And the goal is for the outcome generalized to other contexts or experiences (i.e. friendship development outside of camp (Glover & Hemingway, 2005))
METHOD

- 2013 summer with 19 different specialized camps across the U.S.
- Campers ages 8 – 18
- Social Acceptance Scale (Devine, 1997), Friendship, Perceived Competence, and Camp Connectedness subscales of the Camps Youth Outcomes Battery (ACA, 2011)
- 1 week post camp and 12 weeks follow-up point.
- Compared current perceptions to camp.
RESULTS

- Did engagement in camp have impact on social acceptance, friendships, perceived competence, and camp connectedness immediately following and 12 weeks post camp experience?
DATA ANALYSIS

- .05 p-value as the level of significance
- N = 135 post camp
- N = 96 follow-up
- Independent sample t-tests
- Repeated Measures Analysis of variance (changes over time) for:
  - Gender
  - Number of years campers attended camp
  - Disability typology
FINDINGS

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

- Social Acceptance & Gender
  - Social acceptance decreased for female campers from post camp to 12 week follow-up ($p = .050; \text{MS} = 116.78; F = 3.46; N = 51$)

- Social Acceptance & Disability
  - Social acceptance decreased for campers with Cranial Facial Anomalies, muscular dystrophy, & other physical disabilities from post camp to 12 week follow-up ($p = .022; \text{MS} = 129.57; F = 5.410$)
Camp Connectedness & Gender

- Camp connectedness decreased for male campers from post camp to 12 week follow-up ($p = .046; \text{MS } 116.62; \text{F } = 3.804; \text{N } = 45$)

- No change was found for disability or number of years campers attended camp
FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

» Friendship Skills & gender attended camp
  » Friendship skills increased for all campers post camp to 12 week follow-up;
    males (p = .034; MS 121.25; F = 3.952; N = 45); female (p = .046; MS 115.63;
    F = 3.412; N = 51)

» Friendship Skills & Disability
  » Friendship skills increased for campers who had diabetes and arthritis post
    camp to 12 week follow-up (p = .029; MS 117.32; F = 3.533)
CONTINUE FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

- Friendship Skills & Number of years attended camp
  - Friendship skills increased for campers who attended camp 4 or more years from post camp to 12 week follow-up (p = .027; MS 117.25; F = 3.527; N = 42)
CONCLUSIONS/LESSONS TO SHARE

- Connect with disability specific organizations, park and recreation agencies, school systems, parents for carry-over of skills learned
- Focus on generalization of social acceptance constructs such as equal status, feelings of belonging, and principles of inclusion
  - Female campers and campers with disabilities that may have stigma attached
CONTINUE LESSONS

- Focus on generalization of connectedness constructs such as decision-making, problem solving, sense of belonging, & choice-making
  - male campers
CONTINUE LESSONS

- Promote constructs connected to friendship skills such as developing, building and sustaining friendships
  - Create forum for continued friendship post camp
- Market the value of return attendance at camp as a means for friendship skill development
  - Governing bodies consider development of models based on findings
FUTURE STUDIES/WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

- Social support and social comparison in illness constructs need further testing

- Social Treatment Model for Disability Specific Camp Industry

- “Follow-on Program” Testing & Model Development